



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE ROBIN COMEY**  
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**ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER**

**VICE CHAIR**  
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

March 9, 2022

Dear Chairman Abercrombie and Moore, Ranking members Sen. Berthel and Rep. Case;

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of **HB 198, AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADVISORY BOARD FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR DEAFBLIND** and **HB 5230, AN ACT CONCERNING STANDARDS FOR INTERPRETERS FOR DEAF, DEAFBLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS**.

This past Fall, I had the pleasure of serving as a co-chair on the **Work Group Concerning Issues Affecting Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind Persons**, alongside Rep. Abercrombie and Rep. Fusco. While we began the workgroup with a seemingly large body of work to tackle, the three main goals were to discuss interpreter standards, higher education/workforce development, and mental health. The legislation we are hearing today is presented to revise Connecticut's policies specific to these areas.

We met with stakeholders across the state who were able to provide a tremendous amount of background while sharing their personal experiences of trying to navigate our systems that became fragmented over years of neglect. I believe that by having these voices at the table we made improvements to the resources and knowledge base of our agencies serving the deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing community.

It is critical to note that we have seen a decline in the number of certified interpreters in the state. We learned from the UConn Linguistics Department that there are fewer programs in CT offering ASL interpretation, as well as a shortage of students approaching the profession as a career choice. Massachusetts continues to be a leader in turning out ASL career professionals and making this policy change to accept credentials will support the lack of providers in the current environment.

Another important issue we heard was that there are interpreters that specialize in certain settings. For instance, medical appointments, mental health settings and emergency room visits, would need interpreters that were more knowledgeable about those areas. A legal or judicial setting would need interpreters that understood about the court systems. This legislation makes those distinctions.

And finally, it was evident that there was a level of frustration with the deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing community about fragmented services with regards to where people were directed to for information.

The solution offered through this legislation is to keep maintained a website where all information can be disseminated to residents throughout the state.

I'd like to thank Rep. Abercrombie for the opportunity to participate in this work group. It was a true pleasure to get to know the members of the work group. They were hard working and showed up to our meetings with a sincere commitment to making our state better for the deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing residents of this state. I know that there will be more to do in the future, and I would be happy to be a part of anything going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robin Comey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" and last name "Comey" clearly distinguishable.

Robin Comey  
State Representative  
102<sup>nd</sup> District, Branford